

Message Text

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SUBJ: AMBASSADOR'S TALK WITH SYTENKO

1. SUMMARY. DURING MY CALL OF SYTENKO MAY 12, HE STRESSED REPEATEDLY THE NEED FOR A CLEAR U.S.-SOVIET LINE TOWARD THE GENEVA CONFERENCE AND INSISTED THE USSR CANNOT UNDERSTAND WHETHER THE U.S. IS "FOR GENEVA" OR THE STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH. HE SAID THE SOVIETS ARE WAITING FOR THE CONCLUSION OF THE AMERICAN ME POLICY ASSESSMENT TO HEAR OUR "NEW IDEAS." SYTENKO WAS GUARDED IN TALKING ABOUT RECENT SOVIET-ARAB CONSULATIONS, BUT HE ASSERTED THAT ALL THE ARABS, INCLUDING THE PLO, NOW SUPPORT THE MEPC AND INSIST THAT ANY FURTHER "PARTIAL STEPS" TOWARD A ME SETTLEMENT MUST TAKE PLACE WITHIN THE GENEVA FRAMEWORK WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL MEPC PARTIES. SYTENKO OFFERED NO SPECIFIC VIEWS ABOUT THE TIMING FOR RECONVENING THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, A MATTER WHICH HE MAINTAINED IS A SUBJECT FOR U.S.-USSR CONSULTATION. ON THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM HE SAID THE PLO WANTS TO PARTICIPATE FROM THE BEGINNING AS A SEPARATE DELEGATION, BUT APPEARED TO LEAVE ROOM FOR MANEUVER ON THIS SUBJECT BY CLAIMING THE U.S. AND USSR MUST SETTLE THE QUESTION OF A PLO INVITATION. SYTENKO SAID THE SOVIETS FORESEE NO PROBLEMS FROM THE PLO SIDE IN SITTING AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE WITH THE ISRAELIS AND CLAIMED THE SOVIETS UNDERSTAND THAT THE PALESTINIANS NOW ACCEPT A ME SETTLEMENT BASED ON ISRAEL'S 1967 FRONTIERS. HE WOULDNOT COMMENT ON THE SYRIAN ATTITUDE

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TOWARD RENEWAL OF THE UNDOF MANDATE OR REPORTS OF SOVIETS-ISRAELI

CONTACTS AND HAD LITTLE
TO SAY ABOUT SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS EXECP THAT NO DATES
HAVE BEEN SET FOR A BREXHNEV ME TRIP. END SUMMARY.

2. U.S. ROLE. SYTENKO SAID THE USSR IS WAITING "EAGERLY" FOR THE U.S. TO CONCLUDE ITS REASSESSMENT AND TO HEAR AMERICA'S "NEW IDEAS." HOWEVER, POSSIBLY SHOWING SOME SENSITIVITY TO THE PRESIDENT'S SCHEDULED MEETING WITH SADAT, HE WENT ON TO NOTE THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD BE INVOLVING HIMSELF PERSONALLY THROUGH MEETING SADAT AND RABIN. HE WONDERED IF THE U.S. POSITION WILL CHANGE AGAIN AFTER THESE MEETINGS. STRESSING THAT MOSCOW BELIEVES IT IS IMPORTANT TO RESOLVE THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM, HE STRESSED THAT THE U.S. MUST "TALK MORE" TO ISRAEL, WHOSE POSITION HE CHARACTERIZED AS "UNREALISTIC." SYTENKO CLAIMED THE USSR CANNOT UNDERSTAND WHETHER THE AMERICANS ARE FOR THE GENEVA CONFERENCE OR THE CONTINUATION OF THE STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH BECAUSE U.S. STATEMENTS WHICH EARLIER SAID STEP-BY-STEP WAS FINISHED HAVE BEEN SUPERSEDED BY STATEMENTS WHICH ARE MORE AMBIGUOUS.

3. GENEVA CONFERENCE. WHEN I ASKED WHETHER GROMYKO'S REFERENCE TO THREE PROBLEMS IN HIS SPEECH FOR KHADDAM WAS MEANT TO SUGGEST A PROPOSED AGENDA FOR GENEVA, SYTENKO SAID NO. GROMYKO HAD MEANT ONLY TO SET OUT THE "KEY ELEMENTS," BUT IN THIS A LOT WOULD DEPEND ON THE U.S. HOWEVER, ALL THE ARABS, INCLUDING ARAFAT ARE NOW FOR GEVENA ALTHOUGH ALL SPEAK ABOUT THE NEED FOR "GOOD PREPARATIONS" FOR THE CONFERENCE. WHEN I ASKED ABOUT SOVIET VIEWS ON THE TIMING OF THE CONFERENCE, SYTENKO AVOIDED SPECIFICS, CLAIMING THIS WAS A MATTER FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH THE U.S. I ALSO ASKED SYTENKO ABOUT REFERENCES IN RECENT SOVIET-ARAB COMMUNIQUES TO FURTHER "PARTICAL MEASURES" WITHIN THE GENEVA FRAMEWORK. HE WAS UNCOMPROMISING IN REJECTING NEGOTIATIONS OUTSIDE THE MEPC. ANY FURTHER STEPS, HE SAID, MUST BE DISCUSSED AND TAKEN BY ALL CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS. THEY MUST BE CLOSELY TIED TO A STEELEMENT. THERE SHOULD BE NO EFFORT TO NEGOTIATE STEPS OUTSIDE THE GENEVA FRAMEWORK AND THEN TO EMPLOY THE CONFERENCE JUST TO SIGN AGREEMENTS ARRIVED AT ELSEWHERE.

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4. PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. SYTENKO APPEARED MORE CONFIDENT THAT HE HAS PREVIOUSLY ABOUT THE PLO'S WILLINGNESS TO ATTEND THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. HE SAID THE PLO WOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE SITTING AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE WITH ISRAEL, BUT CLAIMED THE PLO MUST PARTICIPATE EQUALLY. THE MODALITIES OF PLO ATTENDANCE HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED DURING THE RECENT TALKS WITH ARAFAT, ALTHOUGH HE SAID THE USSR BELIEVES THE PLO WANTS TO ATTEND THE CONFERENCE FROM THE BEGINNING AS A SEPARATE

DELEGATION. WHEN I ASKED ABOUT AN INVITATION FOR THE PLO, HOWEVER, SYTENKO APPEARED TO SUGGEST A DEGREE OF SOVIET FLEXIBILITY BY CHARACTERIZING THIS PROBLEM AS A "PROCEDURAL MATTER" FOR THE U.S. AND USSR TO SETTLE. ON OTHER MATTERS, SYTENKO DISCLAIMED ANY SPECIFIC SOVIET INTEREST IN A PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE. HE ATTRIBUTED THIS PROPOSAL TO SADAT AND SAID MOSCOW DOES NOT FEEL THE PLO IS PUSHING IT. ASKED ABOUT THE PLO'S MOSCOW OFFICE, SYTENKO RESPONDED ONLY THAT "IT WILL BE OPENED," BUT GAVE NO INDICATION ABOUT WHEN, CLAIMING THE SUBJECT HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED WITH ARAFAT.

5. ME SETTLEMENT. SYTENKO STUCK CLOSELY TO THE MAIN POINTS MADE BY GROMYKO (APRIL 23) IN TALKING ABOUT THE BASIS FOR A SETTLEMENT.

WHEN I ASKED WHETHER ALL THE ARABS NOW ACCEPTED A ME SETTLEMENT BASED ON ISRAEL'S 1967 FRONTIERS, HE RESPONDED THAT NONE OF THE ARABS--HE SUBSEQUENTLY EXCLUDED IRAQ AND LIBYA WHOM HE CALLED UNIMPORTANT TO A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT IN ANY CASE--ANY LONGER TALK ABOUT ELIMINATING ISRAEL. THE SYRIANS ACCEPTED UNSC RESOLUTION 338 AND THROUGH IT RESOLUTION 242, AND ARAFAT HAS NOT SAID ANYTHING ON THE SUBJECT OF ISRAEL'S EXISTENCE SINCE HIS UN SPEECH (THE IMPLICATION WAS THAT THIS REFLECTED MODERATION ON ARAFAT'S PART). SYTENKO SAID IT IS, OF COURSE, HARD FOR THE PALESTINIANS TO DECLARE A POSITION RECOGNIZING A SETTLEMENT BASED ON ISRAEL'S 1967 BORDERS AND THEY CANNOT BE RUSHED. HOWEVER, THE SOVIETS UNDERSTAND THAT THE PALESTINIANS WILL ACCEPT A SETTLEMENT ON THIS BASIS.

6. UNDOF MANDATE. I ASKED WHETHER SYTENKO THOUGHT THE SYRIANS WOULD EXTEND THE MANDATE FOR THE US FORCES ON THE GOLAN. HE GAVE NO DIRECT REPLY, SAID THE SUBJECT HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED WITH KHADDAM, AND WOULD NOT SPECULATE ABOUT WHAT THE SYRIAN ATTITUDE MIGHT BE.

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7. SOVIET-ISRAELI CONTACTS. REFERRING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS OF CONTACTS IN ISRAEL BETWEEN SOVIET REPRESENTATIVES AND ISRAELIS, I ASKED IF SYTENKO COULD COMMENT ON SUCH REPORTS AND WHETHER THERE WAS ANYTHING NEW REGARDING SOVIET-ISRAELI RELATIONS. SYTENKO SAID ONLY THAT THERE WAS NO CHANGE IN THE SITUATION; HE MADE NO COMMENT AT ALL ON THE REPORTED CONTACTS WITH THE ISRAELIS.

8. KOSYGIN'S TRIP. SYTENKO OFFERED NOTHING NEW ON KOSYGIN'S TRIP TO LIBYA AND TUNISIA. HE READILY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT LIBYA'S STAND ON THE MEPC AND RELATED MATTERS WAS UNCOMPROMISING, BUT, AS NOTED ABOVE, SAID THIS WAS REALLY NOT IMPORTANT SINCE LIBYA, LIKE IRAQ, WAS NOT A CONFRONTATION STATE AND WOULD NOT BE INVOLVED IN MEPC NEGOTIATIONS. SYTENKO INDICATED THAT IT

WAS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT THAT LIBYA AND IRAQ WOULD ALTER THEIR POSITIONS AND WE SHOULD NOT WASTE TIME IN ATTEMPTING TO BRING THIS ABOUT. THE MAIN THING, HE STRESSED, WAS THAT THE ARAB STATES PRIMARILY INVOLVED, AS WELL AS ARAFAT, AGREED ON GOING TO GENEVA.

9. EGYPT. I ASKED WHETHER THERE HAD BEEN ANY MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN SOVIET-EGYPTIAN BILATERAL RELATIONS DURING FAHMY'S VISIT AND WHETHER THERE WAS NOW ANY TIME FRAME FOR BREZHNEV'S VISIT TO THE MIDDLE EAST. SYTENKO SAID NO DATE HAD BEEN SET FOR BREZHNEV'S TRIP AND ADDED THAT IT WILL BE A PROBLEM TO FIND AN APPROPRIATE TIME ACCEPTABLE TO THREE COUNTRIES. AS TO BILATERAL RELATIONS, SYTENKO NOTED THAT THE EGYPTIAN MINISTER OF INDUSTRY HAD JUST CONCLUDED A VISIT TO MOSCOW AND HAD SIGNED SOME AGREEMENTS, AMONG THEM AN AGREEMENT ON THE EXPANSION OF AN ALUMINUM COMPLEX. HE HAD NO COMMENT, HOWEVER, ABOUT THE ISSUE OF EGYPT'S SOVIET DEBT.

10. COMMENT: WE WILL COMMENT IN A SEPTEL ON THE OVERALL SOVIET POSITION CONCERNING THE MIDDLE EAST. SYTENKO'S REMARKS SEEM TO PROVIDE LITTLE INSIGHT INTO SPECIFIC SOVIET ATTITUDES; IN GENERAL, HE SEEMED MAINLY INTENT ON ATTEMPTING TO ELICIT INFORMATION ON OUR VIEWS AND THE RESULTS OF THE U.S. REASSESSMENT.

11. DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS OTHER POSTS AS DESIRED.
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